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Author(s): Keetje Rozemund

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An Old Russian Passage of Dionysius the Areopagite*

KEETJE ROZEMUND

IN 1870 publicity was given to the existence of a sixteenth-century manuscript which contained a number of theological epistles. The owner of the manuscript, V. M. Undol'sky (†1864), had attributed all these epistles to the Russian starets Artemy, who had fled to Lithuania in the second half of the sixteenth century.¹

In 1906 S. G. Vilinsky, following Undol'sky, tried to prove that the epistles in this manuscript (MS Undol'sky, 494), none of which mentions the author in its address, are all by one and the same author, i.e., starets Artemy. Here I shall deal with just one of these arguments, that which attempts to prove that the epistles of MS Undol'sky 494 were all written by the same author.

Vilinsky points out that all the epistles quote Dionysius the Areopagite in support of the religious doctrine proclaimed in them.² However, the quoting of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite cannot be taken as evidence of the identity of the author or authors of these epistles. The South-Slavonic translation of the works of pseudo-Dionysius, by Isaiah, a monk of Mount Athos, had already been in existence for nearly two centuries.³ The oldest Russian copies of it date from the fifteenth century.⁴ Prince Andrey Kurbsky, a contemporary and friend of starets Artemy, likewise quotes pseudo-Dionysius many times as an authority in dogmatic matters⁵; and Ivan IV, in his well-known correspondence with Prince Kurbsky, quotes extensively from the Epistle to Demophilus.⁶

The epistles attributed to starets Artemy twice contain an elaborate quotation from the second chapter of the 'Epistle to Demophilus': once in the 'Epistle to the Lutherans', and once in the 'Epistle to an Unknown Prince'. In the 'Epistle to the Lutherans' the order of the sentences in the passage quoted has been changed.

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¹ Slavyano-russkiya rukopisi V. M. Undol'skago, Moskovskiy publichnyy Rumyantsevskiy muzey, Moscow, 1870, cols. 363–70.

² S. G. Vilinsky, *Poslaniya Startsa Artemiya (XVI vek)*, Odessa, 1906, p. 286.

³ A. I. Sobolevsky, *Perevodnaya literatura Moskovskoy Rusi XIV–XVII vekov*, St Petersburg, 1903, p. 8, n. 2.

⁴ Sobolevsky, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁵ *Sochineniya Knyazya Kurbskago*, vol. 1, *Russkaya istoricheskaya Biblioteka*, Vol. XXXI, St Petersburg, 1914, ukazatel', col. 576, Dionisiy Areopagit.

⁶ *The Correspondence between Prince A. M. Kurbsky and Tsar Ivan IV of Russia, 1564–1579*, ed. by J. L. I. Fennell, Cambridge, 1955, pp. 142–7, 158–73.

The text quoted in the 'Epistle to an Unknown Prince' is closer to the Greek original, and shorter than that in the 'Epistle to the Lutherans'. A comparison of the text in the above-mentioned epistles with that of Ivan IV shows, by the large number of variants, that the Old Russian translation was with only great difficulty understood by both readers and copyists.

I shall now give as much as is available of this text from the 'Epistle to the Unknown Prince' (*K*), drawing the remainder from the 'Epistle to the Lutherans' (*Lutherans*). Thanks to the discovery by the Soviet historian A. A. Zimin, who did considerable research in the manuscript department of the state Public Library in Leningrad (GPB),⁷ a second manuscript of the 'Epistle to the Lutherans' has come to light, viz. GPB O XVII 71., fol. 152 v. et seq.⁸ I prefer following this latter manuscript for the *Lutherans* passage concerned. In notes I shall give variants in *Lutherans* and in the 'Epistle' of Ivan IV (*Ivan*), in so far as they may amend the text as a result of a comparison with the Greek original. In conclusion I shall discuss the most important emendations in the 'Epistle' of Ivan IV which the text following here allows us to suggest. This text reads:

Что оубо, глаголешъ, не подобаеъ ли с(вѣ)щенники нече (G.P.B. O XVII 71, 221 r.) ствѣющаѣ, или ѿ иномъ нѣкоемъ безмѣстномъ ѡбличати^a, и повинны творити? Единемъ же лѣтъ есть хвалащимсѣ в законѣ и престѣпаниемъ того Б(о)га безчестѣющимъ^b? И како с(вѣ)щенники изыавителие б(о)жие? (*ibid* 221v.) Какоже востити^c имоуть людемъ б(о)ж(е)ственнымъ добротѣтели^d, не ѡвѣдѣвше тѣхъ силу? Или како просвѣтѣтъ помраченіи? Или како б(о)ж(е)ственного преподадѣтъ Д(ѣ)ха, іже ниже аще есть Д(ѣ)хъ С(вѣ)тъ им'ствомъ і истиною вѣровавшей? Азъ же ѡтвѣщаю к симъ: "Аще с(вѣ)щенникъ оудобрение есть просвѣщател'ное, весма ѡтъпаль есть с(вѣ)щен'ничьскаго чина же и силы іже не просвѣщателень, і непшоуѣ Б(о)гоу невѣдѣти, наже тѣи собою разоумѣл' есть, и прельстити мнѣти іже л'жеименнѣ ѡтъ того ѡтыца нарицаемаго, и смѣетъ сквернаваѣ своѣ злохоуленіѣ (не бо имамъ реши м(о)л(и)твы) на б(о)ж(е)ственныхъ знаменіѣхъ хр(и)стовиднѣ глаголати. Нѣсть сѣи с(вѣ)щенникъ, нѣсть, но злыи л'стецъ и пороугатель собѣ, і волкъ на божіѣ люди ѡболченъ в' кожоу." (Undol'sky, 494; GPB., 119r.) Но не инокъ сѣа праведно исправлѣти. (GPB., 221 r.)

^a *Ivan*, обличаеми. ^b *Ivan*, обезчествовати. ^c *Lutherans*, *Ivan*, возвѣстити. ^d *Lutherans*, *Ivan*, добротѣтели.

⁷ R. B. Zaborova, I. A. Konopleva, N. N. Rozov, 'Materialy po istorii russkoy literatury v rukopisnykh fondakh G. P. B.' (*Trudy Gosudarstvennoy publichnoy biblioteki im. M. E. Saltykova-Shchedrina*, XII, 15, Leningrad, 1964, p. 163, n. 3).

⁸ A. A. Zimin, *I. S. Peresvetov i yego sovremenniki*, Moscow, 1958, p. 163, n. I (n.b. the misprint of Q XVII for O XVII).

Better readings of this text, as compared with that of Ivan, are the following:

1) The mysterious зло in *Ivan* as a translation of ἀσεβοῦντας must, on the strength of the text published here, be a corruption of злочествѹющаѧ.

2) The Greek τοῖς καυχωμένοις is translated хвалащимсѧ (*Ivan*, хвалящися).

3) Greek τὰς θείας ἀρετάς becomes божественыѧ добродѣтели (not *Ivan* божественое).

4) имѣствомъ i истиною, a translation of εἴξει καὶ ἀληθείᾳ, has been corrupted in *Ivan* into и строим истинною. Имство was a difficult word, as appears from a seventeenth-century Dionysius manuscript, where it has been included among a list of words needing an explanation.⁹

5) светма in *Ivan* must be весма, as was already assumed by J. L. I. Fennell, the editor of the 'Epistle' of Ivan.¹⁰

6) The verb вѣдѣти has incorrectly become видѣти in *Ivan*.

7) καὶ τολμᾷ has been translated as и смѣть. By an error the *Ivan* manuscripts corrupted this into имеет.

8) δυσφημίας becomes злохоуленіѧ in translation, and not зло и хуления (*Ivan*).

9) ἐμὶτὸν becomes праведно, not праведныѧ (*Ivan*).

In 1878 the so-called Epistles of starets Artemy were published in the *Russkaya Istoricheskaya Biblioteka*.¹¹ This edition, however, is very unsatisfactory, partly because very few of the numerous biblical and patristic quotations in the texts were recognised as such and identified by the editors. Though Vilinsky identified some of the patristic sources more carefully, his work is also very imperfect. The small passage which we have discussed here may show how greatly a new edition of these epistles may enrich our knowledge of the texts translated into Old Russian, and of the use made of them in the sixteenth century.¹²

⁹ *Opisaniye slavyanskikh rukopisey Moskovskoy Sinodal'noy Biblioteki*, II, 2, p. 5, No. 107, 4^{12v}.

¹⁰ *The Correspondence between Prince A. M. Kurbsky and Tsar Ivan IV of Russia*, p. 166, n. 1.

¹¹ *Russkaya Istoricheskaya Biblioteka*, Vol IV, St Petersburg, 1878, *Pamyatniki polemicheskoy literatury v Zapadnoy Rusi*, book 1, *Poslaniya Startsa Artemiya, XVI veka*, col. 1201-1448.

¹² Compare *ibid.*, col. 1237-1238, 1344-1345.